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ABSTRACT

In August 1990, the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management initiated a three-year School Conflict Management Demonstration Project. This publication is the final report on the Project. Twenty schools, which reflected the state's diversity, were selected to help assess the impact of the conflict management programs. The results of these programs were assessed by analyzing information gathered from student questionnaires, disciplinary reports, and interviews conducted by independent researchers. The report describes five basic principles of school conflict management programs, and explores notions such as conflict is natural and behavior can be changed. It also outlines the need for conflict management programs and details the types of programs used to manage conflict in the schools, such as the mediation approach, the classroom approach, and the comprehensive approach. Also reported are the findings of the Project, which include decreases in disciplinary action, suspensions cut in half, and improved school climates. Finally, a vision for how conflict management can benefit the state's children and youth is presented. School-related materials available from the Commission are listed. (RJM)

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Conflict Management in Schools:

Sowing Seeds for a Safer Society

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Final Report of the School Conflict Management Demonstration Project 1990–1993

Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT WORKS...

In the Classroom

"I happened to be in a 4th grade class one day and two students started an argument. A third student, who was the classroom mediator, quietly popped right into the middle of the dispute in the middle of classroom activities. She mediated on the spot and within a couple of minutes it was over. The teacher did not have to stop teaching and take care of it himself. He just let the mediator do it. In fact, he may not have been aware that anything even happened!"

—Superintendent

At Home

"Conflict management training has given me better skills for talking, concentrating and solving problems at school and at home. Like curfew and things like that. If my brother wants to stay out late and he is fighting with my parents, I mediate and help them set times for leaving and coming back and things like that. It works out well. My parents like it and my brother likes it. My parents also like that I help people solve their problems at school."

—9th Grade Student Mediator

In the Community

"I attended a gang conference. We were trying to see how the mediation process could be used with some of the problems the gangs have. They took to it. They were interested in what we could offer them, what we could do for them. I was surprised they felt that way."

—12th Grade Student Mediator

"Our juvenile court has been looking for a better way to handle some of its cases. We tried mediation on a few cases and it really worked. Through mediation we can get to the underlying issues and work them out. This should reduce our rate of recidivism. We are planning to set up a full-scale pilot mediation program. The program will use a team of trained mediators - one adult and one high school student.

—Juvenile Court Case Manager

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"As Governor two of my most important concerns have been improving Ohio's education system and business environment. Teaching young people conflict management skills helps to meet both of these goals. By learning and using problem-solving skills, students create a school environment that is safer and more conducive to learning. When our young people enter the work place with these valuable skills, they are prepared to effectively resolve problems that could reduce the quality of goods and services."

—George V. Voinovich, Governor
The State of Ohio

"Many of the disputes that people wish to 'take to court' are better resolved through mediation. Mediation encourages disputing parties to take responsibility for the dispute, enhances their participation in developing a resolution of the dispute, and, usually preserves on-going relationships. Teaching conflict resolution skills to young people makes sense. The skills learned in their youth will enhance their understanding of the various means by which legal disputes may be resolved."

—Thomas J. Moyer, Chief Justice
The Supreme Court of Ohio

"One function of education is to teach young people basic skills in subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics that will help them throughout their lives. We must also educate our students about effective ways of resolving the conflicts that will confront them. Conflict management initiatives help prepare students for life's challenges. Resolution (of conflicts) is indeed the 'fourth R' for the 1990s and beyond."

—Ted Sanders, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ohio Department of Education

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INTRODUCTION

Since opening its doors as a new state agency in May 1990, the Commission has worked with teachers, principals, counselors, professional organizations and the state Department of Education to provide information, consultation and evaluation of school conflict management initiatives.

In August 1990, the Commission initiated a three-year School Conflict Management Demonstration Project. Twenty schools, which reflect the diversity of Ohio, were selected to help assess the impact of conflict management programs. The impact of these programs has been assessed by analyzing information gathered from student questionnaires, disciplinary reports, and interviews conducted by independent researchers. Similar information was gathered from several schools without conflict management programs for comparison purposes.

This is the final report on the Demonstration Project. It describes five basic principles of school conflict management programs; cites the need for these programs; outlines the types of programs; reports the findings of the Demonstration Project; and provides a vision for how conflict management can best benefit Ohio's children and youth.

The Commission thanks all the students, teachers, counselors, principals, superintendents and parents who provided important information about school conflict management programs during this three-year Demonstration Project.

Special thanks go to the schools which provided monthly disciplinary reports and completed student attitude questionnaires for the duration of the project: Coolville Elementary, Coolville; Crim Elementary, Bowling Green; R.B. Hayes High, Delaware; Glenbrook Elementary, Jefferson Elementary, Forest Park Elementary, Roosevelt Elementary, and Central Middle, Euclid; St. Ann, Cleveland Heights; Stivers Middle School for the Arts, Dayton; Talawanda Middle, Oxford; West High and Westmoor Middle, Columbus; Thomas Worthington High and Worthington Kilbourne High, Worthington.

The Commission has published two other reports on the School Conflict Management Demonstration Project. These reports identify important factors for initiating programs; provide answers to commonly asked questions; and make recommendations for how to establish a successful program. See page 26 for school-related materials available from the Commission.

5 Basic Principles of School Conflict Management Programs

Principle 1: Conflict is natural.

Conflict occurs in every school. If handled effectively, conflict can create a good learning experience. If handled ineffectively, conflict can quickly escalate to physical and emotional violence.

"Conflict can be seen either as negative or as a set of opportunities."

—Parent

"If children don't learn to manage conflict, which is inevitable, they won't be able to attend to the important things in their lives."

—Middle School Teacher

Principle 2: Behavior can be changed.

Young people and adults can learn effective ways of handling conflict situations. Behavior in conflict situations improves when people learn effective problem-solving concepts and skills; are given an opportunity to practice the new skills; are encouraged to use their new skills in real life situations; and are able to witness peers and people in authority modeling the new skills.

"We can't start too soon to deal with behavioral problems. Punishment does not always extinguish bad behavior. We can best modify behavior if the kid participates in solving his/her own problems."

—Superintendent and Parent

"Young people do a far better job of monitoring their own behavior. If we want them to become independent enough to solve their own problems they have to learn how to do it. We tend to think adults have all the answers, but youngsters do know what to do in most situations."

—School Board Member

"Youngsters are beginning to talk to each other and actually listen. They utilize problem solving skills on their own without actually coming to mediation. They're using the skills at home. Parents are calling about gang incidents their students dealt with successfully!"

—High School Guidance Counselor

Principle 3: Kids are not the only ones who need to learn conflict management skills.

Schools are a microcosm of society. The attitudes and behaviors of family members, community leaders and national figures follow students and teachers into the school building. Unfortunately, many adults do not model effective conflict management behavior for children.

"The conflict management program in our building has been helpful to me. In minor conflict situations I use the skills I watched our student conflict managers use."

—Elementary School Principal

"One thing that came up is that high school students have requested mediations with teachers, and teachers have requested mediations with parents. It hasn't happened yet because the school doesn't feel equipped to handle these kinds of disputes, but there is a need for that."

—School Board Member and Parent

"Many of our teachers have taken conflict management training and handle many of the conflicts in their room."

—Middle School Teacher

"As a lawyer I think it's important. I come in contact with people everyday who have difficulty dealing with disputes in and outside their family. The legal system is not the best way to resolve some of these problems. If you have other ways to do this, you could deal with these problems outside the court system."

—School Board Member and Parent of student mediator

Principle 4: Conflict management is an important component of a school's comprehensive prevention program.

The problems facing schools today are complex and overcoming them requires a variety of approaches. The main goal of prevention programs is to teach students how to make appropriate decisions in their lives. Conflict management programs teach basic prevention skills, such as ground rule setting, active listening, issue identification, brainstorming, and evaluation of options. These skills help young people make better choices when confronted with disagreements, peer pressure, violence, and alcohol and other drugs.

"Prevention initiatives aim to provide young people with information and skills that will help them make better decisions. Mediation programs and conflict management curricular materials take students a big step in the right direction."

—Ohio Department of Education Consultant

Principle 5: Conflict management programs are not just for "urban schools with a violence problem."

Conflict management programs are designed to provide young people and adults with better skills in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, de-escalating conflict situations and achieving "win-win" agreements. The benefits of teaching these skills include increased citizen participation, better parenting skills, improved classroom management skills, better prepared young people entering the work force, and prevention of violence.

"People think conflict management works for us because we have 'nice students,' but an urban school in Cleveland has the opposite problem. People believe it works for them because they have 'real problems,' but that it won't work in the suburbs. People have to know that it teaches useful skills for everyone everywhere."

—High School Teacher

"Our [rural] school does not have the kind of violence portrayed in the media, but we do have lots of conflicts - name calling, miscommunications, rumors, pushing and some minor fighting. Although currently we don't need conflict management for serious violence prevention, we do need it to teach our young people effective problem solving skills. These skills help to prepare them to successfully handle conflict situations that they will encounter the rest of their lives."

—Elementary School Teacher

The Need for Conflict Management

Conflict management skills are needed because conflict is an everyday part of life. Conflict may be as simple as a misunderstanding between friends or as complex as violence in the home. Most conflicts can and should be handled as they arise, before they escalate into something more complex or violent. Unfortunately, many children and adults lack the skills necessary to effectively resolve conflicts.

An independent evaluator interviewed students, teachers, guidance counselors, principals, superintendents and parents and recorded the following statements about why they believe conflict management programs are needed in schools today.

Society is More Complex and Violent

"All you have to do to show it's needed is to pick up a newspaper or watch TV."

—Elementary School Principal

"Today's culture is teaching children only violent approaches to problem solving. The message is you can do what you want if you use power. The result is not great."

—Parent

"Our society is much more complex. Understanding how to manage it requires more knowledge. Society teaches too much that someone else will solve our problems. We need to teach that we can solve our own problems. We can't count on old ways, we need new skills, one is conflict management."

—High School Teacher

"We see evidence everyday that people are getting more intolerant of each other. Society as a whole is more violent - kids are shot for tennis shoes. Teaching kids conflict management skills is something very beneficial to society as a whole."

—Middle School Teacher

"Our society is more and more driven to conflict - we have more aggression and hostility from people because the society is so highly competitive."

—Middle School Guidance Counselor

Effective Learning Requires a Safe Environment

"By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning."

—National Education Goal 6 which has been adopted by Ohio

"The number one responsibility in a school has to be the safety of the students. In an unsafe atmosphere one cannot learn (no matter what)."

—Superintendent

"School conflict is on the rise. Discipline problems are escalating. He said/she said rumors quickly escalate into more serious problems. As a result, students spend less time learning."

—Middle School Guidance Counselor

Conflicts Are Commonplace—Effective Solutions Are Not

"In a time when divorce is commonplace and everyone is fighting at home as a norm, we find more turmoil in children and we need tools to help."

—Elementary School Teacher

"Most kids are told at home to be men and fight. In some cases it's OK, maybe on the street, but not in school where you have to learn."

—High School Student

"We've got to teach kids alternative behaviors. A child has to have tools other than fighting to resolve conflicts. Conflict management training is the best method for this goal that I know of. It does not fix everything, but it is a piece that empowers kids to become problem solvers."

—Elementary School Principal

"An increasingly diverse school population has to learn how to deal with each other."

—School Board Member

"It is a life skill you cannot function in society without. It's as important as learning how to balance a checkbook."

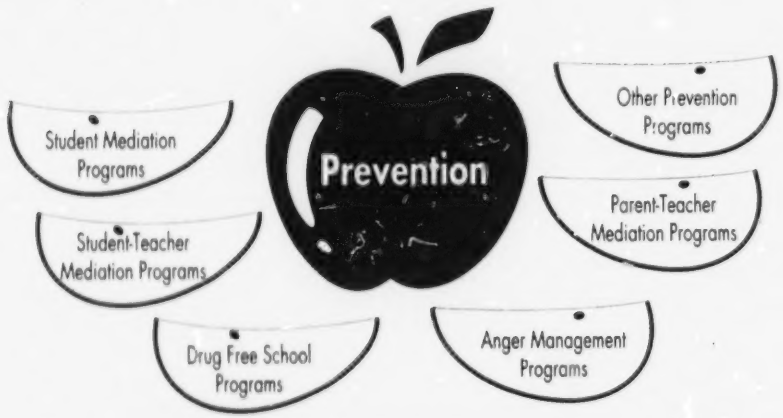
—Middle School Principal

Conflict Management in Schools

Schools take a variety of approaches to teaching students conflict management skills. The most effective approach is when all students, staff, teachers, administrators and parents are provided an opportunity to learn and to practice conflict management skills; and are given the option of resolving disputes through mediation. Three approaches are described below.

Mediation Approach

Mediation programs provide students and adults with an opportunity to non-violently resolve their disputes. A mediator creates a safe environment in which the disputing parties can effectively listen to each other, identify underlying problems, brainstorm various alternatives and decide the best way to handle their dispute. The cooperative atmosphere developed in mediations often helps disputing parties reach a mutually acceptable agreement. A mediator does not have the power to impose a decision.



Mediation is an important piece of comprehensive prevention programming.

Schools establish mediation programs to reduce detentions and suspensions; to encourage effective problem solving; to reduce teacher involvement in minor student conflicts; and to improve school climate. Three basic types of mediation programs exist in schools.

Student peer mediation programs use trained students to guide disputing students through the mediation process. Typically, 10 - 20 students per school are trained in mediation and are commonly referred to as mediators, conflict managers, or fuss busters. Depending on the age of the students, mediations are either conducted in a "mediation room" or take place at the time of the dispute, e.g. on the playground, in the lunchroom or in the hallway. Student mediation programs successfully resolve many different kinds of disputes involving jealousies, rumors, misunderstandings, bullying, fights, personal property, and ending of friendships.

Teacher-staff-administrator-parent mediation programs use trained adult mediators to assist disputing adults in resolving their problems. These programs handle a variety of conflicts, including personality clashes, disciplinary actions disputed by parents, development of appropriate programs for children with special needs, and truancy.

Student-teacher mediation programs are usually an outgrowth of established adult and student mediation programs. These mediations usually involve personality clashes, respect issues, behavior issues, tardiness and other conflicts that diminish student-teacher relationships.

"Mediation has existed for many years, centuries even. In African civilizations it was used in villages and communities. In Jewish history, it was used in the Warsaw ghetto. Native Americans used it, too. So it's not a new fad, it has just been forgotten. The reason all of these groups have used it is that it works."

—High School Principal

Classroom Approach

The classroom approach gives all students an opportunity to learn and practice conflict management concepts and skills. This approach is used to increase personal problem solving skills, to improve teachers' classroom management skills, and to improve school climate. There are basically three ways conflict management is used in the classroom:

Conflict management is infused into existing curricula at all age levels. The skills of conflict analysis, cooperation, brainstorming of options, identifying common interests and understanding opposing perspectives can be easily infused into all curricula.

Teachers and educational consultants creatively infuse conflict resolution into subjects, such as math, biology, health, English/literature, social studies, and work and family life (home economics). Teachers report that the infusion of conflict resolution into traditional courses helps students better understand the relationship between academics and the real world.

Conflict management can be easily infused...

...into core curricula.

"Problem solving is used in math and social studies. Mediation is a problem solving technique. We have teachers who use the mediation process in their curriculum - in literature, to solve conflict between two characters peacefully, compared to violence. In social studies, they mediate a historical conflict to see what could have been done."

—Middle School Teacher

"Conflict management has social studies, reading and other applications, so it is multi-disciplinary."

—Superintendent

Some schools offer **conflict management courses.** These courses allow students to receive intensive skills training and to analyze issues, such as sources of conflict, escalation of conflict, power imbalances, negotiation styles, and neutrality.

Conflict management is infused into teachers' classroom management style. Many teachers strive to create a positive classroom environment in which students can express their uniqueness and can learn to the best of their abilities. Part of creating a positive classroom environment requires establishing an effective approach for resolving classroom conflicts.

"If I teach my students how to appropriately resolve their own conflicts, I have given them an important life skill and I have given myself more time to teach."

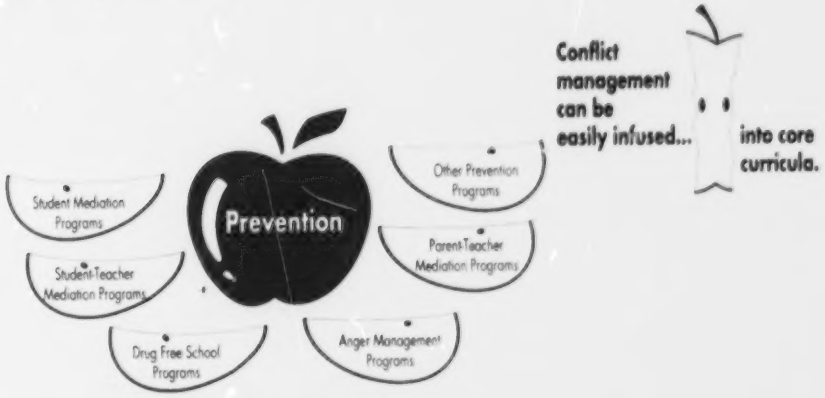
—High School Teacher

Teachers who incorporate conflict management into their classroom management style believe that although teachers must at times use their power to impose solutions, it is better in the long run, if students are empowered to resolve their own conflicts. They also feel strongly that the resolution of many classroom conflicts does not require the involvement of teachers. These teachers report that empowering students to resolve

their own disputes results in students taking responsibility for their actions and teachers having more time to teach.

Comprehensive Approach

Experience has shown that the most effective way to get young people to use non-violent methods for resolving conflicts is to teach them conflict management concepts and skills; to provide opportunities for them to practice the new skills; and to have adults model effective use of conflict management skills. To achieve this goal, schools adopt a plan which implements both the Mediation and Classroom approaches and offer conflict management knowledge and skills to all students, school personnel and parents.



Mediation is an important piece of comprehensive prevention programming.

"Conflict management skills are important. I see kindergartners whose first response to anything is to hit back. It's nice to see that through conflict management initiatives children become more tolerant and attribute things to accidents. Teaching social skills which acknowledge that people are different and should be tolerated, models an approach to life that allows for disagreement and friendship at the same time."

—Elementary School Principal

Another important part of the comprehensive approach is identification of other school programs and/or community organizations that complement the school's conflict management efforts. Complementary programs may include drug-free initiatives, multi-cultural education, peer listening, Girl Scouts' Peace Badge, anger management, and violence prevention. Community organizations that can enhance school conflict management efforts include police, juvenile courts, recreation centers, children services, adult volunteer mediation centers and others.

FINDINGS FROM THE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

The findings reported in this section are derived from data the Commission gathered from schools during its three-year Demonstration Project. Similar data was collected from schools with conflict management programs and schools without such programs.

This project is one of the largest ever undertaken in school conflict resolution research. Over 30 schools in rural, suburban and urban communities participated. The three years of quantitative data consists of hundreds of months of information on disciplinary actions and mediations; and thousands of student attitude surveys.

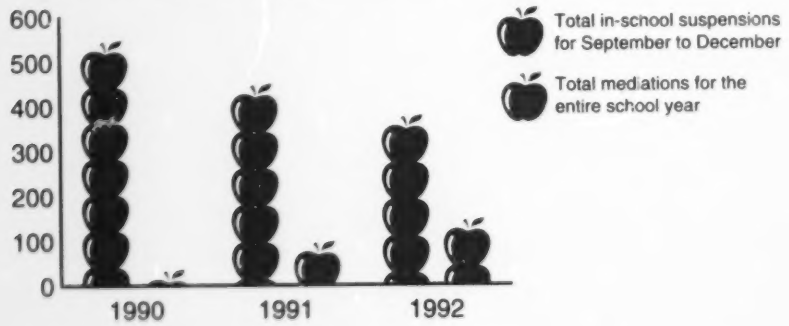
Overall, the information indicated that most students:

- improved their attitudes toward conflict,
- increased their understanding of non-violent problem solving methods, and
- enhanced their communication skills.

Several schools had positive changes in disciplinary actions and school climate. Due to the uniqueness of individual schools and the variety of approaches used to implement conflict management programs, it is not possible to report comprehensive and conclusive trends that apply to all schools. This section of the report highlights quantitative results, as well as, individuals' comments about the achievements of their programs.

Disciplinary Actions Decrease

Disciplinary actions for one high school decreased at the same time its student peer mediation program showed steady growth.



"Referrals to my office are significantly down from past years. For example, on one of our buses two kids were getting into trouble constantly. I told them what my disciplinary solution would be, then I offered them the possibility to work it out among themselves. They decided that they should be able to take care of it by a two-week cooling off period. After two weeks they realized they had mutual interests and went back to being best friends."

—Elementary School Principal

Suspensions Cut in Half

A middle school reported a 50% decrease in suspensions the year after a student peer mediation program was established. The three most common causes for suspensions - fighting, unruliness and truancy - all decreased. Suspensions have continued to decrease every school year. A similar middle school without a student peer mediation program experienced higher and steadily increasing suspension rates for the same three years.

"When we first tried to get it [conflict management] going I was skeptical, but later, seeing it work, I was sold on it."

—Middle School Principal

As part of the Demonstration Project, schools administered a questionnaire to 25% of their student population at both the beginning and end of each school year. The questionnaire included questions about their experiences with mediation; their feelings about themselves and their school; and their responses in conflict situations. Below are some of the results.

Students' Attitudes Affected

A suburban school with a mediation program and conflict management curricula for grades K-8, was compared to a similar suburban school without any conflict management programs. During the three year study, both schools consistently reported virtually no suspensions, and few detentions.

However, students in the school with conflict management initiatives experienced the following positive attitude changes:

- Students were more willing to stop a fight.
- Students were less likely to think people deserved to be beaten up.
- Students were more willing to try to stop friends from fighting.
- Students gained increased confidence in their ability to help themselves and others solve problems.

A middle school, which implemented both mediation and conflict management curricula showed only a small rise in students' willingness to stop a fight, but a similar school without conflict management initiatives reported that students' willingness to stop fights decreased during the year.

A middle school with a strong peer mediation program from 1990-1992, experienced budget cuts, staff reductions and student population increases in the 1992-93 school year. As a result, the mediation program was idle for most of the year and student attitudes about the appropriateness of fighting changed.

During 1990-1992 the percent of students willing to stop a fight increased from 72% to 84%. However, at the end of the 1993 school year, in which the school did not have an active mediation program, only 73% of the students said they were willing to stop a fight.

For the same period, an even larger reversal occurred in the percentage of students willing to talk out a problem instead of fighting. In the Spring of 1992, 82% of the students were willing to talk, but in Spring 1993, only 59% of students said they tried talking it out before fighting.

"This year we had a number of things going on, including personnel loss, which pushed conflict resolution to the back burner, which is really silly because it lessens my work load when it's up and running."

—Middle School Teacher

The student questionnaires and disciplinary reports were not designed to capture every benefit resulting from conflict management programs. An independent evaluator conducted confidential interviews with students, teachers, counselors, principals and parents to identify additional benefits.

School Climate Improves

"Mediation really changed our school a lot, there are fewer fights. I hope to continue mediating in middle school."

—Elementary Student Mediator

"I see kids now who sort of do their own mediation - they'll sit down and talk to each other and even use the mediation lingo. Maybe that's why we did not have too many mediations this year. There is also a whole emphasis in the school on mediation and conflict resolution, reflected in the curriculum, which has contributed to changing the general atmosphere of the school."

—Middle School Teacher

"This is a classic example of how conflict management has changed our school climate. A parent new to the district volunteered in the building and immediately noticed something special in the building. She then become a conflict management trainer. It's good to know it's visible to an outsider, not just the ones who work here."

—Elementary School Principal

Teachers and Counselors Benefit

"Working with our student mediation program has strengthened my ability to use effective problem solving skills when I work with students."

—Elementary School Guidance Counselor

I find myself using conflict management skills with other adults. I stop and listen and think. I use it all the time."

—Parent Assistant

"With student conflict managers teachers don't have to spend as much time acting like a cop. It frees up more time to teach."

—Elementary School Teacher

"Working with students interested in conflict management has renewed my faith in youngsters. They can really accept responsibility for their behavior. It's fun, it really is, to see youngsters growing in front of your face, it's the beauty of education. In fact, I have employed these skills with my friends."

—High School Guidance Counselor

"I think there has been a change in the adults in the building. They are able to see an alternative way to deal with behavior problems. Personally, I have gained information and skills. It helped me better deal with kids in the classroom and with my own children at home. Our school conflict management program can be credited with this change."

—Middle School Teacher

"Working with our student mediation program has made the last three years possible for me. I don't just come in and teach. I work with enthusiastic kids and watch them grow."

—High School Teacher

Student Mediators Gain Self-Confidence

"My own son is a mediator and I can tell you just how impressed he is. He is a kid who never talks to me about what happens in school and never tells Dad about his accomplishments. But when he did his first mediation, he called me! That speaks volumes!"

—Superintendent

"These skills are so great, every child should receive them."

—Middle School Teacher

"The mediators have increased self-confidence and are empowered. I really did not expect that at the outset. In general, all kids are much more positive because they like resolving their disputes through mediation. This is important because kids at this age (middle school) are often bothered by disputes and become distracted from school work."

—Middle School Teacher

Home Behavior Improves

" I use it [conflict management ability] when I get in a fight with my sister. We sit down and talk about the problem and settle it."

—Student Mediator

"If anyone is in a fight at home I know how to help them out better now since I became a mediator. When my cousins fight about who gets to play what, I help them. Usually it takes kids three times 'til they ask for mediation. After the first time, they know I am there. After the second, they will ask for it."

—Student Mediator

These findings support the consensus expressed by people nationally who have followed the growth of school conflict management efforts:

- "Solid results" usually take time to develop. Conflict management programs should not be expected to provide a "quick fix." Depending on the goals set for a school's conflict management program, some positive results can be achieved quickly, while others take longer to attain.
- A variety of factors influence school climate and student behavior. Although conflict management is not a "cure all," it is an important tool for creating positive change.
- An on-going commitment to conflict management initiatives must be made by students, teachers and administrators. If conflict management programs are treated as one or two year projects, many of the positive changes made in the students' attitudes and behaviors during that time will be lost when "it's time to move on to the next project."

Changes occurred at different times for different schools during 1990-93. In some schools positive changes in students' attitudes were seen in the first year or 18 months and then held steady. In other schools, positive changes in students' attitudes were not evidenced until the second or third year of a program's existence.

The number of schools and the variety of conflict management programs in these school created some difficulties in achieving uniform data collection. These circumstances help to explain why consistent trends in disciplinary results did not appear across all school. For example, a school might report suspensions decreased, but detentions remained the same or increased.

Many factors could account for these kinds of modest or mixed results. Several schools lost their conflict management coordinators due to budget cuts, transfers and promotions. This clearly affected the strength of several programs and resulted in the termination of programs in three schools. School staff also believed that the first trial of the police officers accused of beating Rodney King, and the riots in Los Angeles and other cities (Spring 1992) affected students' attitudes about conflict and problem-solving.

Vision for the Future: How Conflict Management Can Help Children and Youth

As of April 1993, more than 200 urban, suburban and rural schools across Ohio have implemented new forms of conflict management in curriculum, classroom management and disciplinary procedures for students. The dramatic increase in these numbers in the last three years is due to the growing awareness of the success of these programs. One superintendent declared, "This [conflict management] is good stuff. Our long range plan is to put it in all buildings in the district."

The challenge facing schools, communities and the state is how to provide all of Ohio's children, youth, teachers, guidance counselors, school staff, principals, parents and community leaders with an opportunity to learn conflict management skills.

The Commission's long-term vision is that every school in Ohio will incorporate conflict management as part of their curriculum, classroom management style, student disciplinary code, interactions with parents, collaborations with community organizations and contract negotiations.

Seeds for achieving this have been sown both at the state and local level:

- The Ohio Department of Education has made conflict management knowledge and skill-building a component of its model curriculum for the Vocational Education Work and Family Life Program.
- At the local level, Dayton Public Schools, Elyria City Schools, Oberlin City Schools, and Toledo Public Schools have each made a commitment to establish conflict management initiatives in all schools within their school district. Several other school districts are actively expanding the number of schools within their system that have these programs.

What Ohio's Schools and Communities Are Doing

Schools that have implemented successful conflict management programs have had to overcome at least two obstacles: a lack of funding and a lack of understanding about the field of conflict management.

In order to secure on-going funding and greater public awareness, Ohio's schools are beginning to reach out for help in promoting non-vio-

lent means of managing conflict. This strategy increases the likelihood that young people will understand and use effective problem solving methods at school, at home and in the community. Several innovative examples exist:

- Lancaster City Schools created the Student Mediators' Support Board, a non-profit organization, to receive grants and donations to continue support for conflict management initiatives in the school system.
- The Fayette County Juvenile Court is working with a local city school to operate a pilot project for resolving juvenile disputes. The school's student handbook states that the first time a student is involved in a juvenile-juvenile assault it will be referred to the Juvenile Court for mediation. The second offense will result in filing a formal complaint with the court.
- The Central Ohio Student Mediator Organization (COSMO) was formed by several high schools. The member schools meet three time each year to allow student mediators and program coordinators to share experiences and to learn from outside presenters.

Although many innovative-thinking superintendents, perceptive principals, dedicated teachers and counselors, and skilled students have successfully initiated school conflict resolution programs, securing on-going funding and increasing awareness remain high priorities.

"Many parents still do not understand that conflict management programs are not judgmental right-wrong programs. They want their child to be right or wrong. We need more work helping parents to understand and even use conflict management skills at home."

—Elementary School Principal

"It's like all the other things we have to do in schools - decide about priorities, and we recognize that due to societal violence we have to set high priority on less violent ways to interact among kids. We need to do it cost-effectively. I don't see it [conflict management] as a tremendously expensive program - the training investment in people is the most costly thing."

—School Board Member

"We need to publicize success stories and show how it [conflict management] really can benefit schools and communities. Develop a network of others in the community who can become the support base - school board, juvenile courts, police, teachers, etc."

—School Board Member

Examples from school conflict management programs in Florida and North Carolina offer additional innovative strategies for how schools, parents, and communities can work together to strengthen conflict management initiatives.

- Dade County Public Schools in Miami are implementing conflict management programs on a district-wide level. Phase I consists of training one administrator, one teacher and one counselor from each school in conflict resolution/peer mediation. Participants are expected to share information from the trainings with their colleagues, train student mediators, and implement a student peer mediation program. Phase II consists of training two teachers from each school to implement a curriculum-based conflict management program. Participants are expected to share information with colleagues and implement the program in their classrooms.

  A district-wide resource support network exists to encourage schools which are successfully operating conflict management programs to share their expertise with other schools.

  "An extremely important element of our conflict management project is the parent education/training component. Currently, we have a core group of twenty-two parents who have been trained in mediation and family oriented conflict prevention/resolution skills. They have in turn trained approximately 400 parents from various schools. During the 1993-94 school year, the parent curriculum will be available in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole."

  —Jean Marvel, Educational Specialist
  Dade-Monroe Teacher Education Center

- In North Carolina, the number of school mediation programs has been growing and schools have found creative ways to fund the programs:
  - an inner city school forged a partnership with a local law firm which not only funded the start-up of a mediation program, but also offered a buddy program to give the students career role models,
  - a county health department established a partnership with the local community mediation center and a middle school, and
  - parent-teacher associations raised funds to support mediation training for students and teachers.

What Other States Are Doing

The National Association for Mediation in Education reports that more than 5,000 schools in the United States have established conflict management programs. States are taking a variety of approaches to encourage the use of conflict management in schools, juvenile courts, families and communities. Some states have passed legislation to authorize the use of conflict management, while others have successfully encouraged its use without legislation. Regardless of the method, states are increasingly encouraging the use conflict management efforts to provide children, youth, teachers, counselors, school staff, principals, superintendents, parents and community members with new problem solving tools.

States are promoting the use of conflict management to address various types of situations involving children, youth, families and school personnel:

- truancy
- special education needs
- community violence
- labor contract negotiations
- juvenile delinquency
- family conflicts
- gang suppression
- school restructuring

The following examples describe how five states are promoting conflict management initiatives.

New Mexico

The state legislature appropriated $200,000 to implement school mediation programs to reduce incidents of school violence and mediate truancy and family related problems that impact children's school behavior and performance. The funding is funneled through the New Mexico Center for Dispute Resolution, which is a private, non-profit organization.

Iowa

The Iowa Peace Institute (IPI), which is a quasi-public non-profit organization, works with the state Department of Education to provide statewide facilitation and leadership for school conflict resolution programs. IPI offers yearly workshops, provides referrals for training, and maintains a lending library. Funding for training and program development has been available through Iowa's Drug Free Schools Program and Phase II Program, which is a statewide education improvement initiative.

The efforts of IPI and the Department of Education are assisted by the University of Northern Iowa, which is the state's primary teacher training institution. Conflict resolution has become an integral component of the teacher education program at the university.

Michigan

The state passed legislation which states that "The state board shall develop guidelines for school districts for the teaching of dispute management and resolution as a separate course or as part of other courses." The guidelines must encourage creative problem solving through peaceful means, including but not limited to, mediation and arbitration.

Minnesota

The state legislature allocated $2.45 million to help students learn how to resolve conflicts within their families and communities in non-violent, effective ways. A school district, education district or group of districts may apply to the Minnesota Department of Education for funds. Applications must contain several elements, including:

- a comprehensive, accurate, and age-appropriate curriculum on violence prevention, nonviolent conflict resolution, and sexual, racial, and cultural harassment that promotes equality, respect, understanding, effective communication, individual responsibility, thoughtful decision making, positive conflict resolution, useful coping skills, critical thinking, listening and watching skills, and personal safety;
- a special parent education component of early childhood family education programs to prevent child abuse and neglect and to promote positive parenting skills, giving priority to services and outreach programs for at-risk families;

- collaboration with local community services, agencies, and organizations that assist in violence prevention, including family-based services, crisis services, life management skills services, case coordination services, mental health services, and early intervention services.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin passed legislation in 1991 requiring school districts to participate in the development of a management restructuring program designed to decentralize school board powers and duties and to foster shared decision making. To meet the state mandate, the districts must create individual school planning teams consisting of parents, teachers and a principal. These restructuring management teams must develop a plan and have it approved by the local school board, the superintendent, the principal, the parent group and two-thirds of the staff of each school. Before beginning any restructuring movement, every team member is encouraged to receive basic leadership and conflict resolution skills training.

What Ohio's Leadership Can Do

Ohio has been recognized as a national leader in using dispute resolution in courts and state government. With the conclusion of the Commission's School Conflict Management Demonstration Project and the growing interest in establishing school conflict management programs, now is an ideal time for the state to adopt a policy for promoting conflict management programs that benefit Ohio's children, youth and families. Conflict management has many applications in schools, homes, communities, juvenile courts and juvenile corrections facilities.

Conflict management programs are closely linked to the Six National Education Goals, which were adopted by the nation's governors. Goal 6 states, "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning." Conflict management has been consistently highlighted by the Governor and the Ohio Department of Education as an important element in achieving Goal 6.

If Ohio is to promote and support the expansion of effective conflict management programs in every school and community that values these skills, three concerns must be addressed:

- awareness and understanding of conflict management programs needs to be built among students, educators, parents and community leaders;
- as new model curricula are developed, conflict management concepts and skills need to be incorporated into them; and
- more funds for training, acquisition of materials and on-going operation of programs must be secured.

The Commission is optimistic that with a modest investment of dollars and resources; and through collaborative efforts of the Governor, Chief Justice, General Assembly, State Board of Education, Department of Education, and the various professional education associations; a policy can be developed and adopted that strengthens Ohio's role as a leader in conflict management initiatives that benefit children, youth and families.

Schools Involved in the Commission's School Conflict Management Demonstration Project 1990-1993*

Amesville:	Amesville Elementary	
Bowling Green:	Crim Elementary †	
Cleveland Heights:	St. Ann School †	
Columbus:	Como Elementary †	McGuffey Elementary †
	Crestview Elementary	South Mifflin Elementary †
	East Linden Elementary	West High †
	Hilltonia Alternative Middle	Westmoor Middle †
	Linden Elementary	
Coolville:	Coolville Elementary †	
Dayton:	Ruskin Elementary	Stivers Middle School for the Arts †
	Wilbur Wright Middle	
Delaware:	R.B. Hayes High †	
Euclid:	Central Middle †	Jefferson Elementary †
	Forest Park Elementary †	Roosevelt Elementary †
	Glenbrook Elementary †	Upson Elementary
Hamilton:	Ross Middle	
Kent:	Theodore Roosevelt High	
Lorain:	Homewood Elementary	Lincoln Traditional Academy
Nelsonville:	Poston Elementary	
Oxford:	Talawanda Middle †	
Pemberville:	Webster Elementary	
Shaker Heights:	St. Dominic School †	
Westerville:	North High	
Worthington:	Thomas Worthington High †	Worthington Kilbourne High†

† denotes schools with conflict management programs (April 1993)

* 208 Ohio schools have conflict management programs (April 1993)

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Recommendations for Planning and Implementing Successful School Conflict Management Initiatives

- Form a diverse planning committee to conduct an assessment of the school's needs to determine what types of conflict management initiatives are best suited to the school.
- Map out a plan for how conflict management will be institutionalized in all schools within the district.
- Educate students, teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, school board members and parents about conflict management initiatives.
- Adopt mediation as an option for resolving all conflicts - student, staff, teacher, administrator and parent - that occur at the school.
- Include both peer mediation and conflict management curriculum as part of a plan to provide all students with better conflict resolution skills.
- Designate a conflict management coordinator for the school district and for each school.
- Actively involve large numbers of students, teachers, guidance counselors, administrators and parents in the operation of peer mediation programs.
- Develop in-school curricular materials and training expertise.
- Encourage the conflict management coordinator to contact and to develop partnerships with youth organization leaders, violence prevention specialists, alcohol and other drug prevention specialists, multi-cultural consultants, parent-teacher association representatives or others to explore ways in which conflict management concepts and skills can complement their activities.
- Evaluate all conflict management activities to determine if they are meeting the stated goals and objectives.

These recommendations are based on information gathered from the Commission's School Conflict Management Demonstration Project 1990-1993. For a more complete explanation of the recommendations see *Dealing with Conflicts In Ohio's Schools: Teaching Students New Skills to Resolve Conflicts Without Violence* published by the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management.

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SCHOOL-RELATED MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM THE COMMISSION

Starting a Conflict Management Program in Your School. An overview of the models and benefits of conflict management programs in schools. Ohio and national resources. Includes an order form for *Introductory Kit* (see below). No charge for single copies.

Dealing with Conflict in Ohio's Schools: Teaching Students New Skills to Resolve Conflicts Without Violence. Second Year Report and Recommendations of the Commission's School Demonstration Project provides answers to common obstacles in initiating conflict management programs and critical points for strengthening existing programs. Summarizes positive results of student attitudes about conflict and reduced disciplinary actions in many schools. Cost: In Ohio single copies are free, additional copies are $5.00. Outside Ohio: order from NAME* (see below).

Conflict in Schools: Can Ohio's Youth Be Taught Better Ways of Resolving Problems? First Year Report and Recommendations of the Commission's School Demonstration Project. This report describes the basic types of school conflict management programs and offers lessons learned from 17 Ohio schools using such programs. It is an executive summary of the *Assessment* listed below. Cost: In Ohio, single copies are free, additional copies are $5.00 each. Outside Ohio: order from NAME* (see below).

Assessment of Implementing Conflict Management Programs in 17 Schools: First Year Report of the School Demonstration Project by Sanda Kaufman, Ph.D., Cleveland State University. This report is a detailed description of the implementation of conflict management programs in 17 Ohio schools—elementary, middle and high. Cost $10.00 each. Outside Ohio: order from NAME* (see below).

***NAME** is the National Association for Mediation in Education which distributes nationally selected Commission publications. Call 413-545-2462.

Introductory Kit on School Conflict Management Programs. Basic information about conflict resolution curricula and student peer mediation programs. Includes a brief history of school conflict management programs, an extensive publication list, and reports from the School Demonstration Project. Cost: Free single copies in Ohio and $7.00 each for each additional copy. Outside Ohio: $10.00 each.

Directory of Ohio Schools with Conflict Management Programs. A listing of schools that have conflict management programs with names and addresses of contact persons. Cost: In Ohio free single copies, $1.00 for each additional copy. Outside Ohio: $10.00 each.

This report was prepared by Terrence Wheeler with the assistance of John Stephens, Sanda Kaufman and Christine Carlson. Graphic design assistance and production provided by the Ohio Department of Education.

The Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution & Conflict Management:

- Serves as a conflict management resource and referral center for schools needing general information, curricular materials, or training.
- Sponsors forums, such as statewide or regional conferences, that allow schools with conflict management programs to exchange information.
- Provides consultation and technical assistance to help schools establish innovative conflict management initiatives.
- Assists schools, courts and community mediation centers in forming partnerships to create innovative pilot projects that help youth to better handle conflict in a variety of settings.
- Maintains contacts with professional education organizations.
- Works with the Ohio Department of Education:
  - to inform superintendents, teachers and guidance counselors about conflict management programs and
  - to infuse conflict management concepts into model curricula.

OHIO COMMISSION ON
DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND
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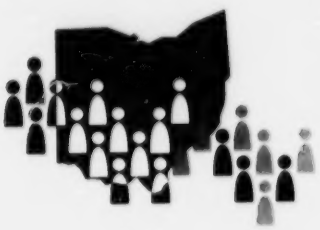

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